

Festivals, Tourism, and Cultural Conservation: Comparing the Livingstone Cultural and Arts Festival and the Nc'wala Traditional Ceremony in Zambia

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Abstract

This essay considers the potential for festivals to contribute to cultural conservation and economic sustainability efforts by comparing two different festivals in Zambia. The country has a lively annual calendar filled with different types of festivals that showcase "traditional" cultural forms. The two analyzed represent two distinct types. The Livingstone Cultural and Arts Festival [LICAF] is a national festival showcasing dances from provinces across the country that takes place annually in the city of Livingstone. The Nc'wala Traditional Ceremony is an ethnic-based harvest festival of the Ngoni people that takes place in the Chipata District in the Eastern Province. My analysis suggests that events that are already vibrant and meaningful for a cultural group in addition to being appropriate for outside audiences are the most effective for the combined goals of economic development and cultural sustainability.

Keywords: dance, folklore, intangible cultural heritage, economic development, ethnicity, Ngoni

Introduction

This essay considers the potential for festivals to contribute to cultural conservation and economic sustainability efforts by comparing two different festivals in Zambia. The country has a lively annual calendar filled with different types of festivals that showcase "traditional" cultural forms. The two I analyze represent two distinct types. The Livingstone Cultural and Arts Festival [LICAF] is a *national* festival showcasing dances from provinces across the country that takes place annually in the city of Livingstone, home to the mighty Victoria Falls, in the Southern Province. The Nc'wala Traditional Ceremony is an *ethnic-based* harvest festival of the Ngoni people that takes place in the Chipata District in the Eastern Province. My analysis suggests that events that are already vibrant and meaningful for a cultural group in addition to being appropriate for outside audiences are the most effective for the combined goals of economic development and cultural sustainability.

In the African context, cultural conservation efforts are aimed at indigenous cultural practices associated with ethnic identity and heritage that are becoming less popular or rarely occurring at all. The blamed culprit is often colonization, westerniza-

tion, globalization, urbanization, along with multiculturalism. The Zambia Tourism website expresses this perspective explicitly: “The decline of traditional customs and culture has been brought about by the infiltration of the west and western ways and the melting pot of various tribes living in the same areas” (Zambia). In Zambia and elsewhere in the region, international, government, and non-profit entities are tasked with creating opportunities for people to produce and consume cultural phenomena in an effort to sustain them. UNESCO, currently through its 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, has been impactful in raising awareness about the inherent value of cultural diversity. It has also enacted international definitions and mechanisms to promote local cultural forms, what it terms Intangible Cultural Heritage [ICH]. ICH includes such cultural practices as music, dance, games, material arts, and foodways. The term “conservation” is significant because it “registers the dynamism of cultural resources, implying that, like natural phenomena, cultural phenomena inevitably change” (Hufford 1994, 3). Conserving culture requires efforts to promote the possibility and motivation for people to continue participating in cultural phenomena while allowing for the adaptation and change that is necessary for their continued relevance. Cultural conservation typically encompasses a combination of documentation, encouraging the continuation of cultural forms through valuing and ensuring opportunities for their continuation, and education about their significance (Feintuch 1988; Ormond 1983). The opening pages of the coffee table book *Ceremony! Celebrating Zambia’s Cultural Heritage* about fourteen of the country’s many ethnic ceremonies articulate this sentiment well:

We often hear the mournful cry of our elders, “the old ways are dying out”; “we need to preserve these customs or they will disappear”. If it is true that the intrusions of modernity are eroding culture, then it is equally true that people are embracing progress, change and growth. This book is not about crying for days gone by, or trying to turn back the clock. It is about inspiring people to celebrate the traditions so that they may continue to grow and adapt healthily. Traditions and customs were meant to hold communities together, and this essential spirit will keep going, as long as people know and understand that the two can go hand in hand. It is an old saying that we cannot know where we are going unless we know where we come from.” (Gurhrs and Kapwepwe, ed.)¹

Cultural conservation “suggests that resource identification be guided as much as possible by those whose culture are affected” (Hufford 1994, 3). The people whose cultural phenomena are impacted should be the ones at the front and center of identifying the issues and strategizing how to sustain cultural vitality.

There has been a recent reorientation in the tourism sector in the region, as elsewhere in the world, to recognize the potential for cultural tourism to augment the industry (see Flint 2006). Previously, most of the attention in the region was on the physical landscape and wild animals. According to the World Tourism Organization, “as tourism moves increasingly towards adopting an experience economy, the tourist experience is becoming the focal point of innovative tourism business activity.” Those

involved in the industry recognize that contemporary tourists “typically seek some form of cultural experience” (World Tourism Organization 2012, 1). Those in the tourist industry also recognize the potential of cultural tourism to enhance the livelihoods of a larger swath of the population, including those living at lower socioeconomic levels. At its most straightforward, cultural phenomena can provide opportunities for people to make money, thus contributing to economic development. Conversely, the opportunity to make money from cultural practices could contribute to conservation by motivating people to sustain their cultural phenomena (World Tourism Organization 2005; Ahebwa et al. 2016). Zambia, and other countries in the region, seek to capitalize on this shift and have in recent years combined their departments of tourism with that of culture into a single ministry as a strategy to develop the cultural tourism sector. The current ministry configuration is the Ministry of Tourism and Arts, which comprises the Department of Tourism, Department of National Parks and Game Management, and the Department of Arts and Culture.

Festivals worldwide have been at the center of cultural conservation efforts (see Hafstein 2018a, 2018b; World Trade Organization 2012, 33). Many festivals, such as the Nc’wala, are themselves ICH in that they serve social-cultural functions, and the cultural group considers them to be important to their heritage. Other festivals, such as LICAF, are created to provide opportunities for participation in and display of ICH for local practitioners and often outsiders. Festivals can foster pride among heritage practitioners, provide opportunities for showcasing cultural forms, and create the motivation for long-term continuation of the performance genres featured. Festivals are multi-generic in that they comprise multiple cultural forms—often combinations of music, dance, food, costumes, and material arts—at a single event, thus allowing for the efficient bundling of ICH efforts by promoting multiple forms at once. Festivals can also be productive for income-generating activities. Performers often receive remuneration, artists sell their goods, food and beverages are sold, and people attending the festival spend money in local markets, shops, restaurants, and lodges. Festivals, therefore, have the potential to contribute to economic as well as cultural sustainability.

The Context

Within local conceptualizations, cultural forms associated with rural ethnic life, particular ethnic groups, and the pre-colonial past are usually encompassed within the categorization of “traditional,” or “*itambi*” [of culture / custom] in the Bemba language, the most widely spoken language in Zambia, or “*mwambo*” in the language of the Ngoni people. Other cultural forms—such as those categorized locally as popular, foreign, or religious—also often feature in festivals or other occasions. My focus is on festivals that forefront what is categorized locally as traditional, the types of cultural forms typically designated as ICH and targeted for conservation efforts. I use “traditional” following this categorization, fully aware that the term is problematic.

Within the category of traditional, the two festivals I analyze represent distinct

types. The Nc'wala Traditional Ceremony is one of the elaborate annual festivals that occur in the provinces and are associated with a ritual or calendric event for a majority ethnic group in that province. The ethnic group's leadership typically organizes these festivals in coordination with the local and national offices of the Department of Arts and Culture and other relevant ministerial departments (Guhrs and Kapwepwe n.d.). Other such festivals include the Likumbi Lya Mize, Kuomboka (Flint 2006), and Mutomboko (Gordon 2004). In addition to these ethnic-based festivals, the capital city of Lusaka and cities in several other provinces host *national* festivals, such as LICAF, that bring together performers and artists from the other provinces in the country to showcase their artistry at a multi-day and multi-ethnic event. Local and regional festivals are also common and can be associated with various occasions, including holidays, rituals, or special events, such as trade fairs. There are other festivals and special events that happen throughout the year in Lusaka that display traditional performances, including national holidays, political ceremonies, the welcoming of special guests, and the launches of new products.

Together, these festivals provide opportunities for the continuation of traditional music, dance, and other artistic practices across the country. Many Zambians are concerned that local ICH is losing to the popularity of new and foreign forms. However, these festivals provide far more opportunities for sustaining traditional cultural forms than in some other countries in the region. I was drawn to doing research in Zambia after two decades of researching in neighboring Malawi, where festivals that feature traditional cultural phenomena had been few and far between. In the last decade, Malawians interested in cultural conservation have looked to Zambia for inspiration. My first visit was in February 2013 with Professor Boston Soko, a Malawian colleague involved in the Mzimba Heritage Association, an organization promoting the cultural heritage of the Ngoni of the Mzimba District. Prof. Soko and other members of the organization had been traveling annually to Zambia for the Nc'wala to honor their Ngoni neighbors and for inspiration about how to create their own Ngoni festival in Malawi (Gilman 2017). I returned to Zambia in the summer of 2016 and was generously hosted by Mr. Prince M.F. Lamba, a Senior Officer of the Department of Arts and Culture. During this visit, I interviewed artists and cultural workers and visited tourism sites to learn more about cultural conservation efforts. In my third visit in May 2018, I traveled with Mr. Lamba and other staff of the Department of Arts and Culture to document the LICAF festival.²

The Livingston Cultural and Arts Festival

LICAF is an annual festival in the Southern Province that brings together cultural groups from around Zambia (and a few from neighboring countries) to perform at a multi-day event in Livingstone. When I attended in May 2018, LICAF was organized jointly by the government's Department of Arts and Culture, Department of Tourism, the National Arts Council, and the Zambian Tourism Agency, a government body "mandated to market and promote Zam-

bia as a tourism and travel destination of choice and to regulate the tourism industry” (Zambia Tourism Agency). This collaboration was an outcome of the government’s goal to integrate the promotion of culture with economic development.

The World Tourism Organization emphasizes that “no tourism destination can succeed without a suitable array of attractions. Without variety, there would be little motivation for tourists to remain or to repeat their visits” (2012: 25). Correspondingly, the organizers strategically scheduled LICAF to take place in Livingstone, which has a “long history of marketing itself as a site of natural and cultural heritage, based on the attractions of the landscape of the Victoria Falls, the memory of David Livingstone and the repute of local ethnographic and archaeological collections held at the Livingstone Museum” (McGregor & Schumaker 2006, 649-50). In their promotion for the 2019 festival, organizers highlighted the combination of attractions:

The festival is among the fastest growing in Africa, making Livingstone-Zambia an irresistible destination if you want to experience the thrill and hypnotizing power of African music and dance; 73 Zambian tribes from 10 provinces...encapsulated in one festival...all happening at a time of the year when the Mighty Victoria Falls is at its thundering best dropping down more than 500 cubic meters of water every second. As if the festival and the Victoria Falls were not compelling reason enough to go to Livingstone, the destination also offers mind blowing adventure activities such as white-water rafting, bungee jumping, wildlife safaris, helicopter rides, steam train rides, and many more. (LICAF-Zambia)

Organizers scheduled the 2018 festival when Victoria Falls was at a peak and on the same weekend as a corporate-sponsored popular music festival, the Mosi Day of Thunder. Festival organizers hoped that combining the traditional arts festival temporally and spatially with that of the popular music festival would draw people to Livingstone to enjoy both events and also visit and pay the entrance fee to the falls, go bungee jumping, stay in local hotels, enjoy the restaurants, spend their money in shops, and buy crafts. The result would be both the opportunity to celebrate and promote the diversity of Zambia’s national heritage *and* to contribute to the tourist destination’s economic prosperity.

Zambia is divided into ten provinces, which are each subdivided into districts. The headquarters of the government ministries are located in the capital city of Lusaka. Offices and staffing exist for each department at the provincial level and in some, but not all, of the districts. In the months preceding LICAF, staff members at the national headquarters in Lusaka worked with those at the provincial levels to identify one cultural group from each province to travel to Livingstone to participate in the festival.³ Some troupes were based in the provinces they represented, while a few were performance groups from a province that were based in Livingstone or Lusaka. For example, the Ngoni troupe from the Eastern Province came from Lusaka. In addition to groups

from each of the provinces, the festival also featured several from in and around the city of Livingstone, three groups from nearby countries (Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Burundi), and one representing China. The Zambia National Dance Troupe, composed of professional dancers employed by the government as civil servants, featured prominently, as did the Livingstone Acrobats, a local youth empowerment troupe.

After a long day of rehearsals and choreographing on Thursday, May 24, 2018, the festival officially launched that evening with a cocktail reception along the Zambezi River. Government officials, the staff of the varying bodies that organized LICAF, and special guests shared food and beverages while enjoying performances by the Zambia National Dance Troupe and listening to welcoming speeches by the heads of some of the agencies involved in organizing the event and elected officials. The speeches culminated with one by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Arts, the highest-ranking government official present. The voluminous spray of Victoria Falls was visible in the distance, though not the falls themselves.

The festival started the next day on Friday, May 25. The performance groups arrived at the festival site in the morning, using the same flatbed trucks and busses that had transported them across the country, paid for by the government. The Maramba Cultural Grounds, located a few miles from the city of Livingstone, was created by the provincial Department of Arts and Culture to host events and showcase local visual and performing arts. On the previous day, staff erected large tents with seating to shield the guests from the beating sun. The VIPs—local Provincial Minister, national Ministry of Tourism and Arts Permanent Secretaries, senior government officials—and other invited guests sat in reserved seating in the nicest tent, closest to the stage. The rest of us scrambled for chairs available in another. As the performances picked up, many people sat or stood in front of the stage in the direct sun, where the view was best. The minister and senior government officials' attendance signified the government's commitment to promoting cultural tourism in addition to providing an opportunity for them to make their status and authority visible locally.

Mr. Buster Tembo served as the Master of Ceremonies [MC]. He was based in Livingstone and was the President of the Zambia Adjudicators Panel, an association of arts adjudicators, and a pastor at the House of Testimony International Ministry. The MC began by welcoming everyone and honoring the special guests in the VIP tent. A series of speakers followed, culminating in one by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Arts. The speeches emphasized the importance of economic development, cultural exchange and diplomacy, and the value of the collaboration between tourism and culture.

At the completion of the speeches, the MC ushered in one dance group after the other. The MC said little about each group other than announcing the province where they were from and sometimes the name of the dance form they performed. Each group wore elaborate costumes appropriate to the dance and performed well-rehearsed pieces choreographed for the stage. The audience watched from afar, clapping and cheering; many took photos or videotaped with their cell phones.

On the periphery of the grounds, a tent advertising local floodways sold plates of



Figure 1: Dance troupe from Northwestern Province dancing at the LICAF Maramba Grounds. Photo by Lisa Gilman

cooked food and snacks. Craft vendors displayed tables of woodcarvings, beadwork, and items made from local fabrics. Neither seemed to get much business, though people did wander by and look. The VIPs were honored with a lavish buffet lunch featuring a variety of local food items: *nshima* (cornmeal thick porridge staple food) with side dishes of meat, fish, beans, multiple different types of greens, and wild mushrooms.

As the hours passed, the MC sped up, giving the groups less and less time, intent on finishing the event by the scheduled end time of 4 PM. One group after the other entered from stage left, danced for 10-15 minutes, and then made their way off the stage when the MC indicated that it was time. At the end of the event, the vehicles transported the performers, staff, and guests back to their accommodations.

The next day, the performers gathered early at 7:30 AM to prepare for the parade scheduled to begin at 9:30. Rows of flatbed trucks, one for each troupe, lined the side of the road near a soccer pitch on the edge of town. Drummers tuned their drums on small fires, while the dancers hopped onto the back of the trucks and started dancing in place. Eventually, the VIPs arrived and lined up at the front of the procession. The parade then made its way for six miles around and through the city and eventually to the Livingstone Golf Course. The first mile or two passed through low-density neighborhoods; some people came out from their houses to watch the performers as we passed. Many pulled out their phones to photograph or videotape the moment and

then meandered back into their homes. When we made it to the center of town, people emerged from stores and restaurants, and some tourists from lodges and hotels. The performers' energy rose with the significant increase in the audience. Some hopped off the back of trucks to engage energetically more directly with their audiences. Owners of local businesses drove alongside the procession to distribute water to dancers along the way. After passing through the city center, the parade continued on a road with very few houses, and thus almost no audience. The dancers were now hot and tired; some laid down on the truck beds for quick rests or climbed into buses for a reprieve. After a while, we came through a high-density lower-economic neighborhood, where hundreds of people flocked to the street outside of houses, markets, and small stores, attracted by the sounds of beating drums and singing. Children howled at the sight of the masked dancers of the Makishi and Nyau performers. The dancers' energy picked up again, many jumping out of the trucks to dance alongside the enthusiastic audience. Some observers along the road ran alongside, following the parade to its destination.

After three hours and six miles of walking and dancing, the performers paraded into the festival arena. A group of majorettes lined the entrance of the golf course and cheered as each group entered and was announced by the MC. The VIPs were already seated in the tent, most not having completed the full parade. The general audience made their way to the non-VIP tent and sat comfortably on folding chairs. The relatively small audience was comprised almost exclusively of the VIPS and other invited guests, the festival staff, and the few people who had followed from the nearby neighborhood.

A short break ensued during which organizers ushered the VIPs to a tent for a generous buffet, similar to the day before. There were a few food vendors selling cold drinks and food on the periphery of the grounds. Unlike the day before, they did not present the food as samples of tradition, nor did it seem to be part of the official organization. I assumed that local vendors took the opportunity to make some money at this event. They sold cold coke products, snacks, fruit, and some hot food, such as plates of rice and chicken stew.

When the VIPs had finished eating and the guest of honor was back in his central position in the VIP tent, all the performance groups clustered in prearranged places on the pitch where they performed in sequence a salutation that the festival's artistic directors had choreographed at Thursday's rehearsal. We then sat through a series of speeches, longer than the day before, but similar in tone and topic. Finally, each group danced, one at a time, on the field in front of the stage, much as they had the previous day. The MC ushered each group on and off fairly quickly, as all were tired. These grounds were much bigger than the Maramba Cultural Grounds, allowing for a larger space to dance, yet creating far more distance between the performers and audience. Occasionally, a few VIPs joined the performers to dance briefly with them and probably give them small amounts of money. The general audience stayed within the designated audience spaces.

The schedule was behind, so the MC only let the groups dance about one piece



Figure 2: Livingstone Acrobats performing at the Livingstone Golf Club. Photo by Lisa Gilman

each, though a few sneaked in some extra time by ignoring the calls to leave the performance space. The event ended at approximately 4 PM. Before leaving, the organizers from the government ministries made sure everyone had received payment. There were some negotiations and disagreements about the amount. Eventually, everyone dispersed to their various lodging to rest and prepare for the long drive home the next day.

LICAF and Economical Possibilities

This festival was intended and had the potential to generate revenue for the local economy. However, very few people came to Livingstone just for the festival, which I surmised was at least partly because it was poorly advertised. During the time preceding the festival, I saw no announcements of it in national venues, nor was it obvious in Livingstone that the festival would be taking place when we arrived on the Wednesday before its launch. Incomplete information about the festival was available on the festival's website and Facebook page. The staff at the hostel where I was staying did not know about it. I also mentioned the festival to the young men that stand around Victoria Falls waiting to serve as informal guides for tourists, and they had not heard of it. Even those working in the tourist industry who could ostensibly contribute to

spreading the word did not know about it. Organizers finally put up posters and banners the day before throughout the city. By contrast, everyone I talked to was well aware of and excited for the Mosi Day of Thunder popular music festival on the night of Saturday, May 26, the second day of LICAF. The Mosi festival attracted an enormous audience, many flooding in from the capital Lusaka and elsewhere.

LICAF's setting on the first day was not in a visible nor centralized location. Traditional dance performances often capitalize on the sound of drumming to attract audiences. The distance of the Maramba Cultural Grounds from residential areas precluded this means of drawing a crowd. There was also no public transportation from town. One had to know it was happening and have a vehicle or be willing to pay for a taxi to get there. The parade on the following day, by contrast, drew a sizeable crowd as it moved through various neighborhoods. However, the distance was so long that most people did not follow the parade to its destination. The audience at the golf course comprised primarily of invited guests or those explicitly involved in the festival.

From what I could surmise, there was some economic benefit to this festival, though it was limited. There was not a flood of out-of-towners. People already in Livingstone came out for the parade, and some probably purchased cold drinks, food items, and other consumables that they might not have otherwise. The large number of people who were involved with the festival—mostly government workers and performers—did spend money on accommodations, food, and other items, augmenting the revenue for local hotels, lodges, restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations, and those selling in the informal sector. Furthermore, the attention on culture for the weekend may have inspired people to buy some crafts and food from the vendors. However, this bump in revenue for the weekend came mostly from government coffers as the ministries involved paid for most of the expenses of those officially involved: performers, provincial government officials, national government officials, and elected officials who came as guests.

LICAF Cultural Conservation

That Zambia has so many national, provincial, and local festivals creates incentives for people to continue participating in traditional cultural forms. This festival provided the opportunity for around twenty groups to perform. For many, this involved traveling across the country or across national borders, which gives them greater visibility and the opportunity to showcase their artistry to many audiences. Those who are popular at one event are likely to be invited to perform at subsequent ones in other locations, thus expanding their opportunities to continue their cultural practice and to gain recognition and visibility.⁴

Being selected to participate in a festival is a competitive process. These festivals provide incentives for performers to perfect and polish their artistry and continue to innovate so that they stand out and are chosen. There is also motivation to develop and maintain high-quality costumes and instruments, thus contributing to the conservation of multiple different cultural forms—dance, music, instrument-making, cos-

tume design, and choreography.

As is a common strategy for countries across the continent, the programming of cultural troupes from each province in the country contributed to Zambia's public image as a diverse country that recognizes and celebrates each of the provinces and ethnic groups within its borders. Having groups perform regional and culturally distinctive genres within the unified space of festivals multiple times annually and year after year is an ongoing display of cultural pluralism.

The festival also provided the opportunity for showcasing a variety of cultural forms outside of what would be deemed traditional. On the one hand, Nyau, Makishi, Chiyanda, and Ingoma were categorized locally as traditional. New emerging forms were also recognized and displayed as part of local traditional culture. The festival included the gymnastics and physical stunts of the Livingstone Acrobats, a police parody, and performance from other countries, including a Chinese dragon dance. Including new and innovative forms, along with some foreign ones, recognized the dynamism of culture and communities (cf. Kiiru 2017).

The festival also had limitations with regard to cultural conservation. While most Zambians would agree that this festival was a cultural festival showcasing traditional performance forms, the festival itself was not traditional. It was organized by the government to display national heritage, and it provided an opportunity for reifying and reinforcing institutional power structures. The festival represented what Valdimar Tr Hafstein refers to as "heritagization," a process that occurs when cultural phenomena are designed to be cultural heritage worthy of preservation (Hafstein 2018b, 128). Through staging and repetition, "performances can become artifacts. They freeze. They become canonical. They take forms that are alien, if not antithetical, to how they are produced and experienced in local settings" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 64). The result, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes, may be "events that have no clear analogue within the community from which they purportedly derive and that come to resemble one another more than that which they are intended to re-present" (64).

Festivals like LICAF have become their own cultural phenomenon. The dances featured have been adapted from the highly variable contexts in which they otherwise occur to fit the festival structure, which has also become traditionalized. They almost always begin with a series of hierarchized speeches, an integral part of Zambia's political culture featured at all public events where there is an official government presence. After the speeches, the MC calls out one group after the other for short snippets of performances; there are dance forms associated with rituals, weddings, initiations, or harvests that have been choreographed to be staged for audiences outside of the cultural context in which they have significance. Performances connected to spirituality, such as the masked Nyau and Makishi, are stripped of their spiritual dimension and presented only for entertainment (Phiri, V. 2008; cf. Gilman 2015; Yun 2019). Furthermore, performances that historically would have been "secret" and intended only for esoteric participants are displayed for outside audiences. Attend any such festival in Zambia, and one is likely to encounter a similar festival structure with the inclusion of bits and pieces of traditional dances presented on stages in much the same way.

The cultural education at LICAF was limited. The MC invited each group to perform, often announcing its home province, without providing any information about the cultural form or the contexts in which each would typically occur. Audience members benefited from the exposure to diverse cultures and enjoyed the artistry of the dancers, but they received little cultural education beyond what they saw and experienced.

Many of the groups that performed were not community-based groups. Though most of the dance forms were associated with a particular ethnic group and specific contexts for performance, the members of the groups that performed were not necessarily from the same ethnicity, nor did they necessarily know much about the cultural context associated with the dance form. Numerous different ethnic groups live within a single province, so it follows that the membership of provincial troupes is often ethnically diverse. Individuals from multiple ethnic groups perform dance forms that may be unfamiliar to a majority or even all of the members. One of the provincial cultural officers shared with me that the drummers in the troupe she brought were not familiar with some of the dances that their group performed. The drummers and dancers thus were sometimes performing to different rhythms. She explained that only those familiar with the dance would know, so the performances were generally accepted in the festival setting. Another cultural officer told me that a group performed a dance from the Northwestern Province, though the members were not from there. The festival thus created an incentive to continue to perform versions of dances, but it did not invigorate the continuation of the dances in their local context where most have significance beyond entertainment.

The choreography and setting of the performances also diverged markedly from the traditional. Cultural forms that would typically occur in a circle formation were redesigned to fit on stage with dancers set in place facing the audience. Performances were shortened, sometimes from something that would typically take place for hours into a short ten- to fifteen-minute segment. I asked members of the technical team, who worked with the performers to set their dances to the specific setting, whether the dancers were happy with how things were going. They said that overall, the performers were satisfied. Many complained, however, that they did not have enough time. Each group prepared many dances, and many traveled a great distance to share them. However, the M.C. often ushered them off the stage after only one or two.

A significant characteristic of Zambian traditional dance forms is that most are participatory and community-based. In many settings, a large swathe of a community can typically join and dance, or a certain segment of the population is expected and accepted as performers. For those not dancing, audience participation is typically open to a broad range of participation. People gather around, cheer, give money, join in, or otherwise engage in the performance. This festival did not conform to this participatory dimension. Organizers staged the audience to be physically distant from the performers, and they choreographed a hierarchy of audience members through the creation of different spaces: the most prestigious guests sat in the nicest seating under a tent, the next level in a tent not quite so nice, and the remaining lower status

attendees stood outside under the sun or seated on the ground.⁵ Only the highest level audience members could join the performers during the salutation when the VIPs entered the arena to greet each group. The rest of us were restricted to a greater distance, our interactions greatly limited. The event was structured within the social, political, and economic stratification of contemporary Zambian institutions rather than the indigenous cultural systems associated with the “traditional” contexts.

Money is an integral component of cultural conservation. Paying people for their artistic labor can enable them to take time away from other revenue-generating endeavors to engage in artistic practices. In addition to livelihoods, dancers need money to buy costume items, materials for making instruments, and props; and, they require money for food and travel to performance venues. Performers at LICAF were paid, thus potentially contributing to the economic well-being of artists and to cultural conservation. However, the amounts were relatively small and contested. From my informal conversations with cultural officers, I surmised that most groups received around 3000 Zambian Kwacha, about \$300 at the time. Most groups comprised fifteen to twenty members, which would calculate to about \$15-20 each for one day of rehearsing and two days of performing. For those who traveled, the total time would have been five to seven full days, not counting the rehearsals they would have held before the event.

The payment levels and rate for accommodation and food set by the government clearly indicated the hierarchy of value placed on different types of participants. The government has a stratified structure for travel allowances for different categories of civil servants. Ironically, the performers who were the main attraction were at the bottom of the compensation chain. According to Mr. Lamba, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Arts was at the highest level because of his position as the head of the ministry. The directors of the ministerial departments were at the next lower level. Drivers and office help were at the lowest stratum. The performers who were sponsored by the ministry were at this lowest level. Though the explicit objective of this event included cultural promotion, the monetary value placed on the performers was far less than that placed on those working to organize their participation or invited as honored guests.

Nc’wala Traditional Ceremony

Unlike LICAF, which is organized primarily for entertainment, Nc’wala is an important annual tradition for Zambia’s Ngoni people.⁶ Zambia comprises around seventy-two different ethnic groups, each of which has its own culture, at the same time that together they comprise the culturally plural nation.⁷ Though people of all ethnic groups live in city centers and settlements around the country, each ethnic group is associated with a particular geographic region. The leadership structures of the ethnic groups exist within their geographic locales and co-exist with the country’s government structure. The Nc’wala is a festival of the Ngoni ethnic group who live in the Chipata District of the Eastern Province. At the helm of their leadership is the Inkosi

ya Makosi (Paramount Chief) Mpezeni. The Ngoni designation throughout southern and eastern Africa is complicated. Each group of Ngoni under a paramount chief identifies as a distinct group. Ngoni across kingdoms also recognize a shared identity, rooted in their history of having fled from Shaka Zulu in what is now South Africa in the 19th Century. Ngoni groups, each under its own paramount chief, exist in different countries across the region, including Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe (Phiri, D. 1982; Guhrs, Mtonga, and Guhrs n.d.). To complicate things further, the Ngoni under Mpezeni extend into neighboring Malawi.

The Nc'wala festival takes place annually in Mtenguleni village. It is a multi-day event organized around ritually significant activities, some of which are restricted to a small esoteric group closely associated with the Mpezeni leadership, and others that are open to a broader audience. Government ministries are involved in organizing the festival. However, unlike LICAF, it is not ostensibly a government festival; rather, it is the Ngoni's and Mpezeni's event, supported by the government and corporate sponsorship.

When I attended in February 2013, I was living in Malawi, supported by a Fulbright fellowship to teach at Mzuzu University and do research on the politics of ICH. My husband, John Fenn, and I drove with our colleague Prof. Boston Soko who was attending the ceremony to pay respect to neighboring Ngoni and to continue his information gathering for developing the Umthetho Festival in the Mzimba District of Malawi (Gilman 2017). We stopped in Mchinji before crossing the border into Zambia and met a contingent of Malawian Ngoni within Mpezeni's kingdom, who loaded onto a large flatbed truck to make the journey. Those traveling included a large group who performed the Ingoma dance at the festival. I was told a Maseko Ngoni contingent from Malawi's Ntcheu District, under Inkosi Makosi Gomani, also made the journey.

Unlike the LICAF, which I attended with festival organizers and was thus able to obtain detailed information about the mechanisms for putting on the festival, we attended this festival as general audience members, though we benefited greatly from Prof. Soko's connections and knowledge. I also gathered information more recently about the involvement of the Department of Arts and Culture from Mr. Lamba.

The ceremony lasted four days and has "both secular and religious elements that give meaning and identity to the Ngoni as a people and a nation" (Guhrs, Mtonga, and Guhrs n.d., 213). The first two days included mostly esoteric events, not open to the public. We arrived on the third day, February 22. Prof. Soko explained that this was the day designated for the chief's confinement in his ceremonial house. According to Tamara Guhrs, Mapopa Mtonga, and Miranda Guhrs, Nc'wala is a celebration of the first fruits of the harvest, and "in the first part of the ceremony, Paramount Chief Mpezeni tastes the first fruit of the land – usually sugarcane, maize and pumpkins. This is followed by a ritual rebirth of the king which involves the king being confined in his house for a period of time before blessing the fruit" (209). The ceremonial round house was next to a small covered open-air pavilion. We parked in the pouring rain nearby and entered the gate into the fenced-in area around the pavilion. Only certain guests, consisting of visiting dignitaries, Mpezeni's advisors and family members, and



Figure 3: Ingoma performers on Friday, February 22, 2013. Photo by Lisa Gilman

those helping coordinate the event were allowed to enter. Because Prof. Soko came as a representative of the Mzimba Heritage Association and of the Malawi Ngoni under Inkosi Makosi Mbelwa, we were granted entry. The open ground in front of the building had been turned into a performance arena. Many people, not allowed inside except when they were performing, crowded around the wire fence where they could peer in and watch the dancing.

The performances were exclusively Ingoma dance, the signature male-dominated warrior dance of the Ngoni people. The Ngoni were known before European colonization for their “highly centralized government and strong military organization,” and symbolism associated with militarism abounded at this and other Ngoni events (Guhrs, Mtonga, and Guhrs n.d., 203). There was no MC, though someone must have been coordinating the dancers. As one group performed for twenty to thirty minutes, another gathered outside the gate, preparing to enter. Each group came from a particular locale either within the province or outside. Dancers donned the costume for the Ingoma dance made out of combinations of animal skins, cloth, rattles around their ankles, and head rings. Many carried knobkerries, swords, and shields as they entered the arena and moved into formation; for some, a line, for others, a half-circle or row and column lineup. The characteristic movement of Ingoma is the slow and firm high knee kick followed by dramatic feet stomping, emblematic of the strength and power associated with a fighting spirit. It is mostly men who dance, while women provide

the *lishombe*, “interlocking hand-clapping rhythms and the beating of cow-hide with sticks” (Guhrs, Mtonga, and Guhrs n.d., 214). A few women joined as symbolic warriors in some of the groups. For the most part, the dancers faced the pavilion in honor of the high-ranking guests.

At some point, Mpezeni came out of the ceremonial house and joined us in the pavilion. We each went and greeted him. This occasion was informal. He wore western clothing: casual blue trousers, a blue and white striped golf shirt, and leather pointed shoes. He occasionally joined the dancers, much to their pleasure, as did some of the others seated with us. He danced energetically, made playful facial expressions, and otherwise added to the enjoyment of the occasion.

During the afternoon, four-wheel-drive vehicles carrying Members of Parliament and other dignitaries occasionally arrived and entered the pavilion to greet the chief. A contingent from Mozambique arrived and received a lot of attention. The Ngoni in the two countries have historically had very little contact. That the Paramount Chief from Mozambique made the journey was symbolic for creating a bridge between the two kingdoms.

While Mpezeni and his guests enjoyed the private performances, car, taxis, and truck after truck with dancers and other attendees arrived. Outside the fence, people socialized and danced amongst themselves. All the dancers received accommodation, many in public buildings such as schools and churches. I was told that Ingoma dancing, *lishombe*, and socializing within and across groups happened late into the night.

The following day was the main day of the public component of the ceremony. The event officially started at around 10 AM when Mpezeni led a procession from his headquarters to the festival grounds, about one mile away. Male warriors, covered in animal skins who fiercely lanced their spears and shouted victoriously, arrived in the arena first. The Inkosi ya Makosi then appeared in full warrior chief regalia, a lion skin draped over his shoulders with its head resting upon his head. Subordinate chiefs also dressed in warrior wear surrounded him. Prof. Soko explained that the walk from his resting grounds to the arena was symbolic of the Ngoni journey from South Africa, when they fled Shaka’s army. The entourage paraded around the arena’s periphery, walking in front of all the tents; everyone welcomed him with enthusiastic cheering and ululating. He ceremoniously made his way to the presiding shelter that was pregnant with symbolic displays. He gallantly sat on his woven throne, surrounded by his sub-chiefs. A full-sized stuffed lion stood fiercely at the front of the pavilion. Unlike the day before, Inkosi ya Makosi Mpezeni was sartorially, ritually, and physically removed from everyone else—a visible signal of his power and authority.

As with the LICAF, there was a VIP tent for government officials and other high-status guests opposite Mpezeni’s and across the performance arena. A booth with a banner advertising the Department of Tourism offered Nc’wala souvenirs for sale: tee-shirts, spears, paintings, and other crafts. Additional tents, most with big banners decorated with the logo of cell phone companies, were situated along the periphery, providing seating for thousands of people in the general audience. There was also ample space for people to stand around. The central arena was punctuated with a single



Figure 4: Inkosi ya Makosi Mpezeni and his entourage. Photo by Lisa Gilman

kachere tree, which according to Prof. Soko, was significant as a location where ancestor spirits congregate. Guhrs, Mtonga, and Guhrs explain its significance as “where the Ngoni first settled when they came to this area” (n.d., 218).

As with LICAF, the event started with a series of speeches, many of them by Members of Parliament and other elected government officials. The representative of the Inkosi ya Makosi was supposed to be last, which would have been significant because the final speaker is always considered to be the highest-ranked. Instead, the person representing the country’s President spoke, which elicited some frustration from those seated around us. We overheard comments complaining that he should not have been allowed to speak for so long, especially because he did not discuss anything relevant to culture. They emphasized that this was supposed to be a cultural and not political event; and, they would have preferred for the Ngoni leadership to have been recognized as the ultimate authority with the final speaking slot.

Throughout the day, an MC invited one Ingoma group after the other to perform. The large round cement stage was situated within the arena and in close proximity to Mpezeni. As with the day before, the groups performed Ingoma and lishombe; each group tried to out-best the others with the quality of their dancing and creative innovations. Unlike the day before when all the groups were adults or mixed-age, some of the groups were school-aged children and seemed to have been organized through schools or other organizations. The dancers faced Mpezeni’s pavilion, their backs to



Figure 5: People milling about spending money. Photo by Lisa Gilman

that of the government VIP stand, a clear indication of who had the highest status. This symbolism contrasted markedly from LICAF, where the government officials were the most prominently honored guests. It was also an inversion from the official power structure in everyday life, where the government's power dominates the ethnic leadership.⁸ Unlike the previous afternoon, Mpezeni did not smile nor join the dancers; instead he sat regally with his counselors watching from afar.

This festival drew a few thousand people to the region. Ngoni people came from all over the country and neighboring ones, an annual pilgrimage to honor their chief and reinforce their membership as Ngoni. Foreign tourists unconnected to the Ngoni were not prominent, though there were some. The two events we attended were open to an outside audience; yet, the displays were nevertheless esoteric. They were about being Ngoni, the harvest, and reinforcing Mpezeni's rightful position as the Paramount Chief. Those Ngoni who came from other kingdoms honored Mpezeni while simultaneously bonding as Ngoni across leadership and national divides. Outsiders, such as a foreigner like myself or Zambians from other ethnic groups, were welcome to attend and watch, but we were clearly guests and observers of a culturally significant event.

The festival's periphery was covered with merchants selling Ngoni-specific items, such as knobkerries, shields, and headpieces made from animal skins. Others sold cold drinks, food items, second-hand clothing, cell phone units, and anything else

they hoped someone might buy. The thousands of people attending the festival milled around, many of them spending money.

The ultimate ritual of the day was when men, dressed as warriors, brought a black bull to be slaughtered under the kachere tree. After the ceremonial slaughter, warriors brought a bowl full of blood for the Inkosi ya Makosi to drink, a ritual intended to ensure a good harvest. After he drank, his praise singer repeated “the traditional praises in an old surviving form of isiZulu,” the language that the Ngoni brought with them when they “came across the Zambezi” (Guhrs, Mtonga, and Guhrs n.d., 209).

We left shortly after in the early afternoon. Prof. Soko explained that the dancing would continue all day. At some point, Mpezeni returned to the resting house where he slept for one more night. In the morning, Prof. Soko told us that guests would come to say goodbye, and groups would give him a final short dance in farewell. People would then disperse, marking the end of that year’s ceremony.

Nc’wala and Economic Possibilities

Mpezeni, members of his kingdom, cooperate sponsorship, and the Zambian government provided the funding for this event. According to Guhrs et al., part of the preparations for this festival annually is the gathering of food and money donations from every village, clan, and chiefdom within Mpezeni’s kingdom. Each chief must contribute animal(s) to be killed and consumed during the ceremony. There are also Nc’wala organizing committees within towns and cities that coordinate the travel of people living in urban areas to Mtenguleni for this ceremony each year (n.d., 214).

In addition to financing from within the kingdom, the government also contributed significantly. In an email on February 9, 2020, Mr. Lamba explained to me that the Ministry of Tourism and Arts and the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs indirectly contribute to organizing the ceremony each year “by ensuring logistical, material, financial and expert services/needs for/of the ceremony.” The ministries “facilitate official invitations to Government VIPs including the President and help to finalize speeches and related protocols.” The Ministry of Tourism and Arts “also holds exhibitions on Ngoni material culture as part of the ceremony.” The government provides travel allowances and stipends to those performers that have been “officially invited to provide entertainment.” The Ministry of Tourism and Arts also sometimes issues endorsement letters that organizers can use in fundraising efforts.

Unlike the LICAF where the Ministry invited and paid for every dance group, some of the dance groups were self-funded. According to Mr. Lamba, the Ministry of Tourism and Arts supported the groups that traveled from Lusaka, while other groups came on their own or local sponsors supported them. The groups from other countries under different paramount chiefs were sponsored by their own leadership. A young man, who was among the contingent that came from Mchinji in Malawi, told me that a group of eighty men and women had prepared for the Nc’wala by rehearsing and raising money for food and transport. They rented the truck for 90,000 Malawi Kwacha, at the time \$257. This amount was a lot of money given that the average laborer at the

time might have made 10-20,000 Malawi Kwacha/\$28-56 per month. They purchased food, gathered firewood, and brought pots and pans so that they could cook while at the festival.

The large number of ministerial staff came as part of the organizing contingent; government paid for their expenses. The corporate sponsorship was obvious and included the Zambia Electricity Supply Company (ZESCO), Airtel, Zamtel, MTN, and the Energy Regulatory Board. Large banners, flags, tee shirts, painted vehicles, and other advertising were visually prominent throughout the festival site and interacted with ceremonial dimensions to create a mosaic of symbols.

Hotels and lodges in Chipata, the city closest to the festival grounds, were packed; restaurants were brimming with customers, as were local grocery stores and markets. Those involved in the formal and informal sectors in Chipata and the surrounding areas enjoyed a boost in their sales as out-of-towners sought accommodation, fed themselves, and purchased items from vendors and businesses. The masses of visitors at the festival were visibly spending money purchasing the many items sold by the vendors. This economic boom was just for a few days, but it was nevertheless significant to local businesses and individuals who could benefit from the increase in sales to add to their capital, buy goods, or otherwise meet their economic needs. Because it happens annually, they can anticipate the increased revenue annually.

Nc'wala Cultural Celebration and Conservation

The reason this festival drew such a large crowd who then spent so much money was that Nc'wala is anchored in Ngoni ritual and is deeply associated with Mpezeni and his kingdom. The majority of people came, whether from within the district or far off, because it was culturally significant to them. For many, in their day-to-day lives, they identify primarily as Zambian and do not do much that would be identifiable to them or anyone else as Ngoni. This festival provides the opportunity for the intensification of Ngoni identity (Toelken 1991). Some people came as performers. They donned animal skins and rattles and stomped aggressively in the characteristic moves of the Ingoma dance while facing their leader whose ritual and political potency was fully displayed for all to see. Those who did not perform sat or stood side by side with other Ngoni within the heightened festival frame. Many were inspired to buy small symbols of Ngoniness such as knobkerries and head rings, which they wore proudly at this event. They moved through the festival space together, ululated in positive response to the performances and their leadership, and otherwise affirmed not only their Ngoniness, but the value of traditional cultural practices. On this day, Ingoma trumped whatever might typically occupy them, such as work, family obligations, television, or a football/soccer match.

I spent most of my time at the official festival where Ingoma groups were scheduled to perform. However, what made the most impact in terms of cultural conservation, most likely happened behind the scenes. Groups of Ngoni gathered outside of the officially designated arena to dance and get to know one another. Performers

wandered the event space and bought bits and pieces of paraphernalia that they could incorporate into their costumes. Dancers were inspired and challenged to stand out by watching one another's innovations. All of these activities contributed to strengthening Ngoni identity. It also motivated people to continue participating in Ingoma, and to do so in new and creative ways to impress the audience, with the ultimate audience member being Mpezeni himself.

All who participated contributed to the continuation of a traditional cultural form, rooted in a long history. Yet, the festival was relevant in the present, as was evident from the hybridity of various elements of informal and formal performances. Women dancers and audience members wore elaborate make-up, and men and women wore fashionable shoes that integrated with their animal skins. Many attendees wore western-wear that they elaborated with small pieces of Ngoni paraphernalia, such as a head ring, beaded necklace, or Zulu hat. Their self-presentation was an expression of contemporary Ngoniness, a cosmopolitan identity that inhabits complex intermixing of hyper-local and global cultural and physical spaces.

This annual event would probably not occur, at least not as elaborately, without the government's efforts to promote culture. It is striking, for example, that neighboring Malawi, which shares a similar history and has some of the same ethnic groups, does not have such well-established festivals.⁹ The government's support incentivizes ethnic groups to continue to hold these annual ceremonies, create new ones, and embellish existing ones. Its involvement thus infuses what is already an important cultural event with funding, incentives, and visibility that ultimately contributes to this event growing and becoming a way for Ngoni people to come together, celebrate, perform their identities, show their allegiance to their chief, and otherwise reinforce their cultural identity. Interacting with Ngoni who come from Mozambique, Malawi, Botswana, and elsewhere creates a more extensive cultural network across national borders that articulates unity across the region.

Conclusion

What lessons can be learned from comparing these two festivals? Both events provided opportunities for artists to participate in local performances, thus contributing to the promotion and conservation of culture. Both events, to some extent, also helped the local economy. Both bundled cultural and economic products to create opportunities for a broad range of constituents to make money, including performers, artisans, cooks, hotel and restaurant owners, and vendors. However, because of its cultural significance, the Nc'wala was far more successful at drawing multitudes both to the region and the festival grounds. The draw for LICAF was far less but could be augmented with increased advertising and more effective linking with the flow of outsiders who come to see the falls and other local physical and cultural attractions.

Festivals are culturally significant because they provide opportunities for people to participate in a variety of cultural forms as both insiders and outsiders. Furthermore, since performance groups are selected based on the quality of performance, there is an

incentive for groups to innovate and be creative in order to be selected. This opportunity was true for both the ethnic-specific Nc'wala and multicultural national LICAF. The events also provided opportunities for individuals and groups to see other groups perform, which could inspire the artists and give them new ideas.

Both festivals made visible the diversity of cultural forms. For festivals, such as the Nc'wala that featured only performances by a single ethnic group, that parallel festivals occur for ethnic groups around the country produces an annual calendar of events that is a national performance of the country's ethnic diversity. For festivals like LICAF, troupes from around the country are brought together to showcase the country's diversity at a single event.

Both types give exposure to artists, who can subsequently be invited to perform at other events. The more opportunities artists have to perform, the greater likelihood that the traditional form will continue. However, neither of these festivals provided significant remuneration to artists, which is a significant component of both economic and cultural sustainability. In a country where poverty is rampant, if artists could gain income from their performances, it would improve their economic well-being, and it would make it possible for people to devote more time to participating in artistic practices, thus contributing to cultural conservation.

Returning to Mary Hufford's quote earlier in the essay, cultural conservation efforts should be driven by "those whose cultures are affected" (1994: 3). From this perspective, Nc'wala was more effective for cultural conservation than LICAF because it was Ngoni people who were front and center of not only organizing this annual event but also its cultural significance. LICAF, and other national festivals like it, contribute to some level of valuing of traditional culture and provide opportunities to participate in it. However, the popularity of these types of national festivals is doing less to promote the continuation of discrete cultural forms in context; instead, it contributes to the development of new folklorized forms that have emerged to fit these types of events in which short choreographed pieces referencing specific ethnic dances are presented to a general audience for the purpose of entertainment.

While those performing at LICAF and similar national festivals keep dance forms alive as a folklorized form, those participating at the Nc'wala contribute to the vitality of Ngoni cultural identity and phenomena, an impact that extends far beyond the festival. The Nc'wala ceremony is itself ICH, in as much as are each of its component parts. It is the motivation of the Ngoni people that contributes to the conservation effort. This model aligns with the World Tourism Organization's recommendation that "local communities should never be passive recipients of tourists but rather active decision makers in tourism development" (2012, 85). By putting on this annual festival, Ngoni people contribute to economic develop through tourism *and* assert their cultural identity, reaffirm their connection to a place, reinforce their allegiance to the ethnic leadership structure, bolster the tradition of their dance practices and costume making, invigorate local food traditions, and reinforce the importance of numerous rituals.

The experience of tourists at these two types of festivals was markedly different.

A majority of the tourism efforts in the region emphasize the importance of attracting foreign tourists in order to boost the economy. From what I have learned from my conversations with colleagues who work in the tourism sector in Malawi and Zambia, little effort has been made to develop domestic tourism outside of building hotels and lodges, often envisioned for those traveling for work. The idea of encouraging citizens to travel within their own country to learn about local history or enjoy different types of cultural phenomena has not been a priority. It is therefore significant that a majority of the tourists who made the journey to Nc'wala, and who travel annually to other such ceremonies in the country, such as the Kuomboka, are Zambian (Flint 2006). These festivals indicate that building domestic tourism around culture and heritage has the potential to contribute to economic development, and significantly, to spread the wealth outside of city centers.

The experience of foreign (and domestic) tourists at the two types of festivals is also very different. At a festival like LICAF, a tourist enjoys a taste of cultural performances as entertainment; yet, they have limited direct experience of the culture or the people. One watches from afar, receives little explanation, and then leaves either entertained or tired from watching one group after the other perform short pieces. At Nc'wala, by contrast, outsiders might not understand much about what is going on, but they experienced culture in motion, something that is significant to the people involved. It allows for a more immersive experience, rather than just distant observation, and thus more "depth of experience" (World Tourism Organization 2012,19).

As has been widely documented, inviting tourists into esoteric cultural spaces to generate income can be problematic in settings where the tourists' presence is inappropriate, is disruptive for insiders, or otherwise overly impacts what is happening. Valdimar Tr Hafstein writes that "folklorization threatens intangible heritage with objectification and once objectified, with commodification, exoticizing heritage for consumption by outsiders and alienating it from the practicing community, or at least transforming the community's relation to its practices" (2018b,135). With these concerns in mind, the Nc'wala model is well suited to tourism because outsiders have limited impact. The festival is large and absorbs "tourists with ease" because of the throngs of Ngoni who are there because of their personal connection to the event (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 61). Outsiders interspersed with insiders does little to change what happens in the public portions of the ceremony or what meaning they have for Ngoni attendees. The more esoteric dimensions are carefully guarded and restricted to those who should have access under Ngoni culture and strictures. The addition of outsiders as tourists only adds to the energy. The larger the audience, the more energetic the performances, and the more revenue that is generated

Scholars writing about ICH initiatives are rightfully critical about the commodification of traditional culture both because of what it can do to cultural forms and concerns about who actually benefits economically (see Bendix 2009; Scher 2011). However, many people in Zambia and across the continent, where there is extensive poverty, are enthusiastic about the economic prospects of developing the cultural sector. Artists of all kinds welcome expanded opportunities to make money from their

art. And some businesses and government entities recognize the potential of culture in economic development. My analysis of these festivals suggests that finding ways of injecting energy and resources into cultural forms or events that are already vibrant and culturally significant to the communities associated with them in order to increase the meaningful roles they have might be the best way to *also* find ways to expand the economic potential (Foster 2013; Yun 2019). People value the Nc'wala Ceremony. Because the government has infused it with additional resources, it has grown to be even bigger and more exciting, and thus significant to the Mpezeni Ngoni, even expanding to the Ngoni outside his chieftaincy. Because it has grown so much and is so vibrant, people choose to come and see it, which leads to domestic and potentially international tourism, and thus to economic development.

I will conclude by repeating that a striking problem with both festivals is that those who perform, and thus contribute the most to cultural conservation efforts, are ironically the ones to benefit the least economically. As mentioned already, cultural tourism has the potential to enhance the livelihoods of a greater swath of the population, including those living at lower socioeconomic levels. Aligning the monetary remuneration or benefit with the cultural value of participation would go a long way toward enhancing conservation objectives *and* addressing the economic needs of those who most need it.

Notes

- 1 There is no publication date listed for this volume. I purchased it from the Department of Arts and Culture in Zambia in the summer of 2016, shortly after it was published.
- 2 I am grateful to the Department of Arts and Culture for hosting me during my 2016 and 2018 visits. Mr. Thomas Mubita, then Acting Director of the Department within the Ministry of Tourism and Arts, was generous in allowing me access to department staff, transport, and events. I am indebted to Mr. Lamba, who hosted me during both visits, introduced me to Department staff, arranged for me to interview artists and cultural workers, took me to relevant cultural events, always answers my never-ending questions, and read drafts of this essay.
- 3 Coordinating national dance events that include performance troupes representing each of the provinces in a country has been widespread across this part of Africa since the colonial period. Scholars have analyzed these types of festivals in specific geographic and historical contexts in order to determine the ways in which they have been used as a strategy to accomplish multiple, sometimes conflicting objectives, such as controlling populations, mobilizing political movements, creating national identities, fostering ethnic and regional pride, educating youth, raising money, and so on. For some examples, see Castaladi 2006, Gilman 2009, Kiiru 2017, Schauert 2015.
- 4 Organizers of a Zimbabwean festival who accompanied the Zimbabwe troupe that performed at LICAF officially invited several of the Zambian groups to join them at their festival in Zimbabwe a few months later, all expenses paid. This is an example of how successful cultural events can snowball into other cultural and economic opportunities.
- 5 See Gilman 2009 for a detailed discussion about how performance events are used to display and reinforce power relationships.

- 6 This and other such ceremonies in Zambia grew out of complicated combinations of pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial political and socio-cultural dynamics (Flint 2006, Gordon 2004). In contemporary Zambia, people consider this festival to be strongly rooted in Ngoni leadership and identity.
- 7 The categorization of “ethnic group” in Zambia, and elsewhere on the continent, is complex and the result of a long history of power struggles, migration, colonization, shifts in the socio-political environment, inter-marriage, and so on (see Kashoki 2018; Lutz and Kula 2008). Recognizing its complexity, for the purpose of this essay, I use the term loosely for the commonly designated cultural groupings in contemporary Zambia.
- 8 The performance of power and authority by government officials, local leaders, and dance performers at each of these festivals is outside the scope of this essay, though it deserves much deeper analysis.
- 9 From the time of this research into writing in 2020, Malawians have been actively developing ethnically-based festivals.

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Responses

Exploring a Win-win Approach Between Cultural Conservation and Economic Development

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I was extremely fascinated and in deep resonance when reading Professor Lisa Gilman's essay, "Festivals, Tourism, and Cultural Conservation: Comparing the Livingstone Cultural and Arts Festival and the Nc'wala Traditional Ceremony in Zambia." The author and I obviously share a similar interest: we are trying to explore how to safeguard intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and at the same time promote the economic sustainability in contemporary societies from the perspective of folkloristics; we both hope to find a possible way to achieve a "win-win" result at this point. This dilemma is challenging in all countries and communities in today's world, and it needs to be explored jointly by all governments, scholars, tradition-bearers and other stakeholders. In view of the close relationship between folkloristics and the ICH safeguarding projects, folklorists should be contributing to this issue.

However, within the limited observations I have been able to make, folklorists have not achieved much in the exploration of this issue: most folklore scholars are reluctant about promoting economic development. This hesitancy was evident in the statement made by Madame Noriko Aikawa-Faure, former director of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Unit, UNESCO. At the International Symposium on Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding and Rural Revitalization in Belt and Road Countries held at Beijing Normal University at the end of 2018, Aikawa-Faure surveyed how discussions on "development" evolved in the ICH discourse of UNESCO:

Since the Convention entered into force in 2006, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the ICH (hereafter called the Committee) has taken up this topic with prudence. At the outset, the Committee was concerned about the adverse impacts of the commercialization of the ICH on its safeguarding. The discussion then progressed towards an acknowledgement of the contributions that the economic exploitation of the ICH could make to its sustainability and revitalization and the economic and social development of related communities. (Aikawa-Faure 2020)

Into the time of writing in 2020, in the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and relevant documents, it is still emphasized that tourism is a double-edged sword, and that we should be vigilant in dealing with tourism and the related over-commercialization of ICH. In China, most folklorists share negative attitudes towards the commercialization of ICH; as a result, the comprehensive research on the role of the tourism industry in cultural safeguarding has been limited. In one of the few projects on this topic, grounded on my long-term fieldwork, I proposed that the community-driven model is fundamental for the combined goal of ICH safeguard-

ing and rural revitalization (Yang 2020). By comparing three cases of utilizing oral traditions to develop tourism in China, Germany and America, I put forward a “1-2-3 model” to achieve a win-win goal between protecting oral tradition and developing local tourism (Yang 2014).

Based on the background above, I am greatly inspired by Professor Gilman’s paper. Due to limited space, I would like to highlight three points in particular.

First, the paper integrates the purport of theoretical folklore and public folklore. Through in-depth, informative ethnographic research, the author explores the potential and then provides suggestions for solving the dilemma of simultaneous cultural safeguarding and economic development facing the whole world, and adding a strong impetus to this field which lacks enough exploration by the academic community.

Second, by comparing two Zambian festivals, the paper points out that community-based and ethnic-based festivals have greater potential in terms of achieving win-win results. Similar ones to both the two types of Zambian festivals can be found in China as well as other countries, and, as the festival economy has been drawing increasing attention, governments and businesses have been increasingly interested in the *national* festivals. This paper, however, convincingly depicts that locally-rooted and community-based festivals are more likely to achieve the combined goals of economic development and cultural sustainability. It thus reminds the stakeholders about the different types and diverse roles of festivals, and especially the potential of community-driven festivals in safeguarding ICH and developing the economy. This conclusion is not only important for governments and companies around the world, but also beneficial for festivals to get more established in communities.

Third, it provides an exemplary model for studying tourism from the perspective of folkloristics. My students always ask me, when many disciplines study the tourism industry, what are the advantages of folkloristics? In my opinion, the key features of a folkloristics’ perspective includes (but is not limited to) emic perspectives and ethnographic methods. Professor Gilman’s paper provides such an excellent example. Taking festival as the focal object and Mary Hufford’s viewpoints as the basic attitude, it emphasizes that “cultural conservation efforts should be driven by ‘those whose cultures are affected.’” By observing, comparing, and describing various members from within and outside of the communities as well as their attitudes towards cultures and economic benefits, this paper presents a distinct emic perspective. Through ethnographic research, the author vividly displays comprehensive aspects of cultural heritage safeguarding and economic development in the two festivals in a detailed manner, which delivers immersive feelings and persuasive conclusions. All these show the value of folkloristics in studying and depicting the world.

In addition to these, I am also very interested in two other points in the paper, which may be worthy of the author’s further attention and exploration.

One is that I noticed the author pointed out at the end of the paper, “a striking problem with both festivals is that those who perform, and thus contribute the most to cultural conservation efforts, are ironically the ones to benefit the least economically...” Indeed, how to fairly benefit the whole community is an important part of the ethics

of all safeguarding projects. Folklorists should work closely with the communities to discover successful practices and methods that could benefit those living at lower socio-economic levels. In a Chinese case I studied, the villagers who lost their land because of urbanization took the initiative to develop folklore tourism, which benefited the villagers and lifted the village out of poverty. Similarly, an Indian NGO exploited the tourism industry to help local artists in a poor village and improved their lives and promoted female artists' access to more equal social status (Ananya Bhattacharya 2016).

The second is the author seems to be critical of folklorized forms, which is understandable in the context described in the paper. However, it is also necessary to notice that folklorized forms can play new roles and functions in new contexts. John H. McDowell demonstrates in his study in Northern Ecuador that folklorized forms can give rise to richly multivocal discourse in expressive contact zones and that they can stimulate and reinforce local discursive practices when they inspire acts of cultural reclamation (2010). My research in Northern China also shows that the "mythologism"¹ produced by the local tourism industry actually originates from the mythical traditions within the community, and the mythologism performed by the tour guides eventually become a resource for tourists to express themselves and communicate with others—in this process, mythologism circulates back to the community and becomes a useful source for further communication and creation. Therefore, folklore and folklorized forms are not necessarily contradictory, but instead, they can also be mutually transformational in an endless succession (Yang et al 2020).

Notes

- 1 According to my re-interpretation, the term "mythologism" mainly refers to the reconstruction of mythology in modern cultural industry and electronic media. For more explanation and discussion about this term, please see Lihui Yang et al. *Mythologism: Reconstructing Mythology in Heritage Tourism and Electronic Media* (in Chinese). Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2020.

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Paying to be the show? Rethinking Festivals and Tourism in Cultural Conservation Policy

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“People from other cities can’t believe we spend money to dance in the festival,” told me once Edwin Loza Huarachi, a middle-aged practitioner of Diablada, one of the dances performed in the *Festividad de la Virgen de la Candelaria* in Puno, Perú. Just like him, every year, around eighty thousand dancers spend large amounts of money in outfits, transport, and other expenses to participate in this celebration. Why would people pay to be the show, especially in areas as economically challenged as the Andes?

This old question was the first thing that came to my mind after reading Lisa Gilman’s piece entitled “Festivals, Tourism, and Cultural Conservation: Comparing the Livingstone Cultural and Arts Festival and the Nc’wala Traditional Ceremony in Zambia.” Indeed, her text sounded oddly familiar: what she said about festivals and its multiple participants in Zambia could have also been said about my home country Perú. Moreover, her compelling piece brings up a concern of global relevance: In which ways, and under which circumstances, are festivals relevant for people? And how can this relevance translate into forms of safeguarding that are also economically viable for practitioners?

Putting scholarly attention onto festivals is not an odd choice from the perspective of heritage conservation and safeguarding. Alongside craft fairs, music and dance festivals are arguably the most widespread metacultural operations (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004) for the safeguarding of expressive culture around the world. As such, they are often a repository of a whole lot of different expectations, including cultural affirmation, heritage conservation, authenticity display, entertainment, community creation, and economic dynamization, among others. It is thus no surprise that festivals have received their fair deal of attention from scholars in the arts and humanities, ranging from appreciation for their role in cultural safeguarding and community creation to critiques toward the power relationships embedded in them and the aesthetic transformations they entailed. More technical debates on how to organize them, how to align them with policy objectives, or how to make them economically viable, seems to have been left for cultural entrepreneurs, policy makers and public humanists.

Seen from this stance, Gilman’s article offers a refreshing perspective. While engaging with such debates, her piece points in a different direction: the viability of festivals for economic sustainability via tourism. This matter of concern speaks directly to some of the expectations we tend to have over festivals, complicating the often taken-for-granted relationship between expressive culture, festivals, and income by tourism. At the same time, her perspective expands from current critical heritage studies scholarship by exploring whether heritage regimes (Bendix, Eggert and Peselmann 2013), despite being problematic, can at least potentially provide poverty alleviation

to grassroots practitioners. In sum, it is a piece that engages with the concerns of cultural policy practitioners from the perspective of critical heritage scholars, providing a much-needed bridge between both realms.

One important contribution of this article is that it points out that not all festivals are created equal, and it establishes (or at least I like to think it does) differences between state-organized and community-based festivals of traditional music and dance. We in Peru tend to make a similar distinction between *festividades* (which are community-based) and *festivales* (which are organized by public or private organizations). I always found it disturbing that both are named “festivals” in English, as they entail completely different dynamics. While *festivales* tend to be organized by particular entrepreneurs and the practitioners are mainly the show being shown, in *festividades* the practitioners are part of a community that produces the event together. This is why Edwin Loza Huarachi would pay to dance in Virgen de la Candelaria: he is not an attraction but a grassroots participant.

While one might argue that in the eyes of tourists they are both attractions, this article does a fantastic job in showing how the quality of participation of practitioners is completely different in both festivals. While practitioners participate of *festivales* mainly out of economic gain, they take part of *festividades* out of more culturally meaningful incentives. Based on this, the article identifies a relationship between quality of participation and economic success: while the outcome of *festivales* respond to variables such as organization and marketing, *festividades* seem to attract people (and their resources) out of their own rooted communal meaning. As the author mentions, *festividades* are not events where intangible cultural heritage is displayed, but rather events that are intangible cultural heritage themselves.

This is, in my opinion, the main scholarly contribution of the article, and one that could be potentially impactful in heritage and tourism policy. It encourages both scholars and policy practitioners to think of festivals-as-metacultural-operations in a different manner. If what seems to engage people is the nature of the event and not the specific dances it features, perhaps the latter are less significant than the former for safeguarding effects. In that case, it would require us to switch the attention of safeguarding and promotion efforts from music and dance itself to the communal frame that allows them to reproduce and thrive on the ground. A community-oriented safeguarding approach aimed to supporting the grassroots development of *festividades* themselves would probably be an ideal strategy, reserving *festivales* for safeguarding practices that lack the community support of a thriving *festividad*.

What makes sense for safeguarding, however, does not necessarily do so for tourism, as the sustainability of a cultural practice says nothing about its appeal to visitors. The article suggests a way out of this dilemma by referencing an immersive experience as a central attraction of *festividades*, observation congruent with her assessment of the visitor’s outcome of both festivals. The piece, however, also allows us to think of tourism in the *festividad* in a more meaningful way. Indeed, Gilman identifies that tourism in festivals works better when the former adapts to the dynamics of the latter. This is important, as it allows the community to maintain control over how visitors

engage with their cultural practice, hence overcoming the risk of commodifying their heritage (Kaul 2007). However, a point that the author hints at but that could have been better highlighted is the fact that many of the practitioners of the *festividad* are tourists themselves. Indeed, as Gilman points out, many of these community participants come join their *festividad* from out of town, injecting resources and dynamizing the local economy. So yet another merit of this article is that, in asking how festivals and tourism can engage in a productive synergy, it also invites us to think of tourism itself in new ways.

To sum up, I find this article to be a significant contribution to intangible cultural heritage and tourism policy from the perspective of folklore and critical heritage studies. Such contributions are as uncommon as they are necessary, as they reveal critical problems within interventions that could otherwise benefit grassroots communities via safeguarding. By asking whether (and how) intangible cultural heritage tourism can deliver tangible benefits for practitioners, Gilman meets the concerns of multiple local authorities and community advocates that struggle to navigate a heritage regime not always aligned with grassroots needs. Perhaps as much as critical perspectives they also need rigorous academic research that helps them make the most out of the arrangement we currently have.

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